

## Preface

### Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2006](#) Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor March 6, 2007

Across the globe, men and women are pushing for greater personal and political freedom and for the adoption of democratic institutions. They are striving to secure what President Bush calls "the non-negotiable demands of human dignity."

Despite personal risk and against great odds, courageous individuals and nongovernmental groups expose human rights abuses. They seek to protect the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, workers, and women, and to stop the trafficking in human beings. They work to build vibrant civil societies, ensure free and fair elections, and establish accountable, law-based democracies.

These impatient patriots are redefining the limitations of what was previously thought to be possible. Indeed, in the span of a few generations freedom has spread across the developing world, communist dictatorships have collapsed, and new democracies have risen. The rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are protected more fully and by more countries than ever before.

This noble work continues - but it is not yet complete and it faces determined opponents. Not surprisingly, those who feel threatened by democratic change resist those who advocate and act for reform. Over the past year, we have seen attempts to harass and intimidate human rights defenders and civil society organizations and to restrict or shut down their activities. Unjust laws have been wielded as political weapons against those with independent views. There also have been attempts to silence dissenting voices by extralegal means.

Whenever non-governmental organizations and other human rights defenders are under siege, freedom and democracy are undermined. The world's democracies must defend the defenders. That is one of the primary missions of our diplomacy today, and we hope that the Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006* will help to further this effort. With these thoughts, I hereby submit these reports to the United States Congress.

Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State